

**Testimony of the Honorable James H. Maloney**  
**at the Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands.**

**July 24, 2001**

Chairman Hefley, Ranking Member Christensen, Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on HR 1814, which would authorize a feasibility study on a very important scenic trail that runs through my congressional district.

First, I would like to thank my colleague from New England, and partner on this bill, Mr. Olver for providing leadership on this issue. He has worked very hard to develop this legislation and has been a real champion in the effort to protect the scenic, historic, and cultural integrity of our natural environment.

There are approximately 700 miles of Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails in Connecticut. Recently, the entire Blue-Blazed trail system in Connecticut was designated as an official state greenway.

The center point of these trails is located in my district at the City of Meriden. Specifically, the "Hanging Hills" formation and Mt. Lamentation both in Meriden offer unobscured views of the Connecticut River and a terrain of tumbled ledges, brooks, forest and shallow bogs. The Metacomet trail, which was established in 1929, follows a striking traprock ridge running north from the "Hanging Hills" of Meriden to the Massachusetts line for approximately 51 miles. The trail continues on to Mt. Manodnock in New Hampshire. The southern end of the trail, which also begins in Meriden as the Mattabesett Trail, was established in 1932 and continues south for 55 miles. These two trails, the Metacomet and the Mattabesett, offer the finest ridge walking and cliff views in all of Connecticut.

Combined, these two trails almost completely bisect the state. The Metacomet/Mattabesett Trails not only offers vistas of Long Island Sound, agricultural land, rolling hills, and the Connecticut River, but also provides a mostly uninterrupted greenway through a portion of the state that has seen remarkable growth and urbanization in recent years.

Population density in Connecticut continues to rise, as does the demand for open recreational spaces. In fact, portions of my Congressional District saw the highest level of growth in the entire state according to the latest census figures. I have worked hard to ensure that the quality of life of Connecticut families is not adversely affected by these recent growth trends.

The designation of these trails as part of the National Scenic Trails System would further that work.

With the common goals of protecting open space and providing recreational opportunities across America, the Federal, State and Local governments should be working together. This bill is an important step to ensure that this and other opportunities like it all across our country are not missed.

Lastly, I would like to point out that this legislation has the support of every Member of Congress whose district is home to a part of this trail system. This remarkable level of support indicates the importance that communities like Meriden place not only on this system of trails, but also on public protection of all of our nation's most precious open spaces.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

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